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ABSTRACT

The primary tasks of the ethnographic researcher are to discover, describe, and comparatively analyze different speech communities' ways of speaking. Two general abstractions occurring in ethnographic analyses are normative and cultural. Communicative norms are formulated in analyzing and explaining the "patterned use of speech." Analysis of cultural communication specifies the "meaningful system of communicative behavior" that is governed by an intersubjective understanding of what is coherent and meaningful. While communicative norms specify the appropriate performance of speech, cultural communication places the performance in a particular interpretive context. Both normative and cultural analyses offer distinct and complementary insights into communication phenomena. The ethnography of communication as a perspective and method offers a productive way to describe and interpret human communication. An analysis of the film "High School" demonstrates the ethnographic approach to communication. A conversation in the film between a counselor, a student, and the student's mother illustrates a communicative norm (that teachers must be addressed with respect) and the cultural component (adolescent language). Other ethnographic research literature also illustrates these two abstractions. By focusing on communicative norms and ignoring the cultural codes in communication, researchers are missing sources in understanding the patterned use and meaning of human communication. (HTH)

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ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION: CULTURAL CODES AND NORMS

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As a qualitative methodology, the ethnography of communication enjoys a well-grounded history from the traditional work in Anthropology of Boas, Benedict, and Mead to the semiotic work of Geertz and Goodenough.[1] Through this rather distinctive history, ethnographic studies have developed a particular set of methodological and interpretive procedures. Several of the more specialized procedures and interpretive patterns have been discussed and descriptive frameworks formulated.[2] The ethnographic perspective and method has not escaped the attention of communication scholars.[3] With an increased interest in an ethnographic approach comes an attendant need to systematically delineate appropriate methodological and interpretive procedures for the student of communication.

This essay discusses the ethnography of communication as a perspective and method which offers a productive way to describe and interpret human communication. The ethnographic approach is adopted because it permits one to subsume diverse insights each of which makes an abstraction from or analytic reduction of the human communication process. Two analytic reductions which are grounded in the ethnography of communication are discussed as useful descriptive and interpretive tools providing different and revealing insights into human communication. A brief discussion will compare and contrast the ethnographic and rules perspectives.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

The ethnography of communication studies the uses of speech and their interpretation or meanings as these are found in particular communities or human groups. The ethnographer discovers and describes how linguistic resources are used and interpreted in particular speech communities. Because these resources are culturally specific, therefore cross-culturally diverse, they must be discovered in each case. Specifically, the ethnographer is faced with discovering and describing the patterned use of speech in a particular place and time, and, understanding the meaning of the speech for those who use it.[4] In other words, the ethnographer 1) describes the patterned use of speech, and 2) interprets the meanings speech has in a particular speech community.

Two abstractions useful in the ethnographic analysis of communication are normative and cultural.[5] Each provides a partial and insightful glimpse into human communication processes. Some current problems in communication research result from confusing two complementary and analytically distinct modes, specifically the normative and the cultural. Explicating normative and cultural analyses of communication should curtail some of the apparent conceptual and methodological ambiguities in some communication research.

Communication Norms

A normative analysis of communication abstracts from behavior those patterns of speech use which apply to some culturally defined unit.[6] Communicative norms can be understood by specifying how culturally specific units (emics) are to be performed and the contexts

in which they are proper. The function of communicative norms is to regulate the use or performance of speech. For example, consider the communicative norm "address older persons with respect" which functions to regulate speech, or, more specifically, to guide interaction between older and younger persons. Other examples such as "talk openly with one's spouse," "make eye contact with the audience," and "fathers should punish their children nonverbally" further illustrate the analytic abstraction of communicative norms in ethnographic research.

It is helpful to examine communicative norms in reference to their strength or force as 1) prescribed or uses which must occur and are therefore obligatory, 2) preferred or uses which are perceived with favor, 3) permitted or uses which are allowed, and 4) proscribed or uses which must not occur.[7] Prescriptions and proscriptions often occur in codified law, for example, "don't yell fire in a theater" or "don't say 'kill the president' at a public assembly." Preferred and permitted norms are often of negotiable status in the course of communication conduct. In Blue Collar Marriage, Komarovsky describes the role of talk for blue collar families.[8] Wives expressed considerable frustration in their inability to "talk much" with their husbands. The husbands seemed satisfied with the role of talk in their marriage. In this blue-collar culture, the communicative norm, "talk to one's spouse" had different force for wives than for husbands. For wives it is strongly preferred; for husbands, talk with wives is borderline permitted-proscribed. The norm is negotiable with varying degrees of force. In this way, the four P's, prescribed, preferred, permitted, and proscribed are helpful in distinguishing the relative force of communicative norms.

Communicative norms are also analyzable referring to their intensity and crystallization.[9] The intensity of a norm refers to its salience or force as described above. Crystallization is the degree of consensus or agreement with a norm. A norm is considered to have normative power when it is high in intensity and crystallization. For instance, in American culture the norm that "one keep promises" apparently is forceful and therefore has normative power. Other norms, e.g. that one should attend church on Sunday, might have high crystallization but low intensity. The norm may have consensual support in discourse but rarely be acted upon. Communicative norms such as these are manifestations of vacuous consensus. Consider the blue-collar norm above where women preferred talk and men premitted talk. As presented by Komarovsky there is little consensus on this norm; women are for it, men are less inclined to "talk." The norm seems to have a high degree of salience or intensity; those for it and those against it feel strongly about their stands. When there is a high degree of intensity and a low degree of crystallization, the norm has conflict potential.

Communication norms, then, are those abstractions from language behavior which specify how speech acts are to be performed and the contexts in which they are proper. Communicative norms are considered in reference to 1) their strength or force as prescribed, preferred, permitted, or proscribed, and 2) their crystallization and intensity as attaining normative power, vacuous consensus or conflict potential.

Cultural Communication

This section is an attempt to specify the second general move in an ethnographic approach to studying communication. Cultural analyses

entail a particular abstraction from and an analytic reduction of the fundamental material of study, communication conduct.

The cultural analysis of communication presupposes a domain of language behavior which is governed by an intersubjective understanding of what is meaningful.[10] The communication process is assumed to be constituted, in part, of regular patterns of interpretation which govern and create intersubjective meaning through language behavior. Intersubjective meaning, therefore, is assumed to be a manifestation of intersubjective convention, not subjective intention. As Charles Taylor has pointed out:

> We have to admit that intersubjective social reality has to partly be defined in terms of meaning; that meanings as subjective are not just in causal interaction with a social reality made up of brute data, but that as intersubjective they are constitutive of this reality.[11]

Schneider also emphasizes intersubjectivity and meaning when he defines culture as:

> a system of symbols and meanings, I consider to be one important determinant of action, and I hold that social action is a meaningful activity of human beings. Social action requires commonality of understandings; it implies common codes of communication; it entails generalized relationships among its parts mediated by human understanding. That one act can have consequences for another is not only a function of the effects of that act; it is also a function of the meaning which that act has for the persons involved.[12]

The cultural study of communication is concerned with that meaningful system of language behavior which is governed by an intersubjective understanding of what is coherent or meaningful. It is important to point out that cultural communication analysis does not claim that meaning is exclusively intersubjective or that all

intersubjective communication is meaningful. Whether personal, idiosyncratic meaning is useful in communication analysis is a question not directly addressed by analysis of cultural communication. And certainly there are intersubjective interactions which are less than meaningful. The point here is to specify the domain of cultural communication which is the analysis of that system of language behavior which is governed by an intersubjective understanding of what is coherent and meaningful.

Cultural communication functions in two general ways, 1) to unify the communicative norms within a coherent system of symbols and meanings, and 2) to generate meanings through discarding, altering and creating conceptions in reference to conventional meanings. While communicative norms are generally formulated to specify patterns of speech use from an observer's perspective, the cultural analysis of communication places speech in a particular system of meaning from the native's perspective.[13]

Any abstraction via a cultural analysis is grounded in the linguistic texture of a particular group, for this is the fundamental datum and problem in ethnographic approaches to communication research. I will use the following as three, of the many, useful tools in the analysis of cultural codes in communication.[14]

When interpreting the native's orientation, one embraces the cultural units which the natives take-for-granted, and, may focus analysis on 1) the concepts and symbols which are seen to occupy a central and significant role in natives' speech, 2) the premises and associated terms which create the radiants of meaning for the fundamental concepts, and 3) the values of particular arrangements

of concepts and premises according to their moral weight. Concepts consist of those symbols or conceptual tools which are used in constructing a world view. They are the fundamentally necessary terms for the ethnographer to delineate when formulating the cultural function of communication. Premises specify those recurring associations that are made between concepts. As concepts are woven into a linguistic texture, premises are evidenced which specify particular cluster(s) of concepts. An analysis of values abstracts from particular concepts and premises assessments of goodness or badness. By considering concepts and premises according to their localized value, one constructs a logical hierarchy, a moral map, of natives' communal standards. By interpreting a value structure this way, one can gain insight into the resources which inform the routine decisions and assessments of native speakers.

In a recent ethnographic study by Katriel and Philipsen, two focal concepts or symbols are identified, "mere talk" and "communication." The premises or terms related, in speaking, to "mere talk" were "normal chit-chat" and "small talk"; those attributed to "communication" were "really talking", "supportive communication", "real communication" and "open communication."[15] They argue that some American speech implicates a higher valuation of "communication" over "mere talk." Their study provides a brief but useful illustration of concepts, premises and values as three conceptualizations of the natives' particular cultural orientation.

In summary, the cultural analysis of communication presupposes regular patterns of interpretation which govern and create intersubjective meaning through language behavior. A cultural analysis

yields the symbolic structure, constituted in speech, which is necessary for interpreting a given corpus of communication conduct. Three analytic reductions useful in the analysis of cultural communication are concepts, premises and values. Cultural communication functions to unify communicative norms and to generate new meanings.

In short, a normative analysis of communication specifies particular alignments, or co-occurrences, of speech behavior. Normative patterns are inferred by considering how speech activities are aligned, how observed patterns are accounted for by natives, and how problems in speech alignment are corrected or repaired. After communicative norms are located, they can be assessed regarding their force, intensity, and crystallization. Analyzing communication as such leads one to claim: X norm has a certain legitimacy in a speech community. On the other hand, a cultural analysis of communication specifies instances of shared meaning, of mutual intelligibility, in a given corpus of speech. Cultural codes are inferred by examining natives' concepts, premises, and values which occur unproblematically in a community of speech. After cultural codes are located, they can be analyzed regarding certain dimensions of their meaning.[16] Considering communication as such leads one to the claim: X concept or symbol has a particular meaning in a speech community. Both analyses, the normative and cultural, offer distinct, and complementary, insights into communication phenomena.

Summary

The ethnography of communication as a perspective and method offers a productive way to describe and interpret human communication. The

primary tasks of the ethnographic researcher are to discover, describe, and comparatively analyze speech communities' ways of speaking.[17] Two general abstractions occurring in ethnographic analyses are normative and cultural. Communicative norms are formulated in analyzing and explaining the patterned use of speech. Analysis of cultural communication specifies the meaningful system of communicative behavior which is governed by an intersubjective understanding of what is coherent and meaningful. While communicative norms specify the appropriate performance of speech, cultural communication places the performance in a particular interpretive context.

An Illustration

I will demonstrate the ethnographic approach to communication research by using a small segment from Frederick Wiseman's 1969 film called High School. This is not a "dramatic" film. It is an "ethnographic" film depicting the routine events in Northeast High School - outside of Philadelphia - from the natives' orientation.[18] The intent here is to present a text from which normative and cultural analyses of communication may be abstracted. This analysis embraces one particular instance in high school. The description and interpretation of the communication is, therefore, partial. Whether this analysis is representative of High School specifically or high schools in general is open to debate.[19]

The focus in this brief analysis is the description and interpretation of a particular text. There are three participants in this text, a school counselor, a student, and the student's mother. They

are seated, apparently in the counselor's office. By the tone of the conversation, it is evident that the student has been reprimanded for misbehaving and her mother was "called-in" for a conference. As we enter the scene, the student is attempting to describe the episode which resulted in her being reprimanded.

Student: We were all just messing around. We locked her in the closet and threw a book...

Counselor: I admit that the teacher wasn't doing the best that she could. What did you contribute?

Student: She is messing around like everybody else.

Mom: Well, can you tell me what "messing around" means? This is what I've been trying to find out...for almost every time you say messing around, what does it actually consist of?

Student: We were, I admit, talking, laughing.

Mom: Well, just plain talking and laughing isn't offensive.

Student: Well, uhm, we threw a book or something...

Mom: OK, you threw a book around...

Student: Not just me (pause)

Mom: But, whoever was involved?

Student: Yea, I know I did, I admit I talked back a lot.

Mom: Did you talk back to the teacher?

Student: Yea. (pause)

Mom And this is what you call messing around? Isn't that more disrespect?

Student: What I did, what I did was more disrespect. What I, what the rest, what else everybody did was just messing around.

Mom (later): One of the worst things to do is to be disrespectful in the way she talks or manner of speech.

On the one hand a researcher may ask, "what patterns of speech use are evidenced in regulating the language behavior in this text?" In abbreviated form we may ask "what communicative norm(s) is (are) evidenced in this speech community?" We may abstract from and analytically reduce this empirical data by formulating a communicative norm, "students must address teachers with respect."

This is, of course, not the only communicative norm functioning, though it appears to be a fruitful formulation for the following reasons. The conference was called to reprimand the student for some "rule" violation; the student was being called to account for her past speech manner which exhibited "disrespect." The norm is clearly prescriptive in that its violation has been recognized and the violator, the student, was being called to account for the violation. The norm evidences high intensity and crystallization with the counselor, mother and student in conference to orient to and support the norm, "students must address teachers with respect."

Given this brief analysis, we may conclude that the communicative norm, "students must address teachers with respect" describes a pattern of speech use which has legitimacy; it regulates a significant portion of the language behavior in this text. The norm appears to have prescriptive force with normative power or high intensity and crystallization. And hopefully, such a brief analysis illustrates how a normative abstraction provides a partial and insightful glimpse of the human communication process.

Suppose for a moment that we are interested in the question, what concepts, premises and values are embedded in the cultural

communication of this text? This is an interesting and productive question given the task of analysis, for it is isomorphic to the mother's question when she asks "can you tell me what 'messing around' means? This is what I've been trying to find out...for almost every time you say messing around, what does it actually consist of?" This mother does not understand what the daughter means by "messing around." She does not have ready access to the students' culture, specifically, she does not know that part of it which is symbolized by the term "messing around."[20] In a sense, the mother is exhibiting her "incompetence" in not understanding a communication code of the High School community. Given this set of concerns, the task for the analyst of cultural communication is to specify the cultural code shared by and embedded in this community's language behavior.

Given this segment from High School, we can choose two key concepts, "messing around" and "disrespect" to focus our inquiry. Through an analysis of the discourse, we can associate "messing around" with "throwing a book or something" and, perhaps, "just plain talking and laughing." "Disrespect" is associated with "talking back to the teacher." These are the premises of "messing around" and "disrespect." Also we can understand that disrespect is "one of the worst things", therefore, valued somewhat less than messing around. These premises and values constitute the cultural code for the concepts of "messing around" and "disrespect."

Hypotheses of cultural communication allow the researcher to place language behavior in a particular system of meaning and coherence. In this case, we can interpret "messing around" on the basis of its premises "throwing a book or something" and "just plain

talking and laughing." "Disrespect" can be interpreted as "talking back to the teacher" and is, of course, de-valued. This type of abstraction allows for a partial and productive explanation of a particular system of meaning and coherence embedded in human communication processes.

This analysis has been necessarily brief. It only scratches the proverbial surface of an ethnographic approach to communication. Hopefully, the general types and utility of normative and cultural abstractions have been demonstrated with the above illustration. Both are slightly different analytic reductions which coalesce empirically. Both should be understood as complementary and interdependent. For instance, the cultural code for "disrespect" and the communicative norm, "students must address teachers with respect," reinforce one another while suggesting a "respect theme" for the High School community in particular and, one may speculate, high schools in general. By subsuming both normative and cultural analyses of speech, the ethnography of communication presents useful descriptive and interpretive tools which provide different and revealing insights into human communication.

Ethnographic Research

Several ethnographies of communication illustrate varying degrees of emphasis on cultural and normative processes in speech. We will discuss some of them here in an effort to further delineate the cultural and normative analyses in ethnographic research.

Philipsen has examined both cultural and normative processes in a setting he called "Teamsterville."[21] In the article, "Speaking 'Like a Man' in Teamsterville," attention is focused on the communicative norms which guide speaking in a "manly" way. Acceptable communication conduct for Teamsterville males is illustrated by specifying the ways speech use is patterned and performed, and, how it gains legitimacy in Teamsters' routine life. For instance, when a man is performing the episode of "punishing a child," the norm governing his conduct could be stated as, "the man should hit the child." If a man does not follow this norm then he is considered unmanly to Teamsterville natives. Such instances are used to support the norm: child punishment should be performed nonverbally.

In the article, "Places for Speaking in Teamsterville," Philipsen reports "in part the meaning which speech has in a community."[22] This essay primarily examines Teamsterville's culture of symbols and meanings. Native terms and their definitions are postulated:

1) "Neighborhood"--A setting of definite boundaries with specific blocks where an idiosyncratic style of speaking characterize "those from around here."

2) "Street"--A setting of the street and sidewalk where men engage primarily in sociable speech.

3) "Corner"--An outdoor setting on a street corner where talk is appropriate for boys and emphasizes their group similarity by sharing experiences.

4) "Porch"--The porch is the principle setting for initiating talk in the neighborhood. While not exclusively for women, it is of primary importance for them.

This analysis explains how terms such as neighborhood, corner, street, and porch entail certain cultural premises about the role of speech in the Teamsterville community. The places for speech are identified;

the concepts and premises of the speech setting are described; the meaning of the terms is discussed. This research reports, in part, the cultural processes of Teamsterville speech by placing the communicative code in the meaningful system of this speech community.

In an analysis of the sacred and secular dynamics of African American communicative patterns, Daniel and Smitherman illustrate the call-response sequence.[23] According to these authors, the call-response accounts for the most fundamental communication strategies in Black church and secular life. We can state this sequence as a communicative norm; if in the presence of a call, one ought to answer with a response. Much of their analysis considers what cultural concepts and premises are associated with a call and a response. For instance, "Gawd's master," "Lawd," "ak-baba-hunda," "fix it up Reb," and "tell it" constitute coherent responses in Black culture. Such cultural concepts and premises are embedded in the communicative performance of call-response. This Black speech pattern functions to unify the self with the community and the community with the spiritual. The communicative norm provides the basic structure of the speech sequence while the cultural symbols provide the coherent and meaningful tools for the performance. Understanding these cultural and normative processes allows one insight and accessibility to the performance and understanding of the speech in this community.

In a related analysis, Gumperz researched Black-White differences in the cultural processes of a public speaking setting. Specifically, a Black speaker in the presence of a predominantly White audience claimed, "we will 'kill' Richard Nixon."[24] To the predominantly White audience, this utterance constituted an episode

of threatening literally to kill the man, Nixon. To the Black audience members, "kill Nixon" was interpreted in accordance with a different cultural premise which stipulated the episode, finish Nixon politically. These differing communicative codes were used, in court, in response to the speech norm, one ought not to say "kill the president" in public when kill constitutes a literal meaning in the speech episode. This is a clear example of how cultural premises which are embedded in normative sequences, account for differences in meaning.

In studying the speech communities in Martha's Vineyard and New York City, Labov noted the use of linguistic change.[25] In this report he explains some of the communicative norms which characterize linguistic changes. The central thrust of his analysis focuses on the communicative codes which accompany changes of communicative norms. In other words, he responds to the question, what social meaning does it have when one changes normative patterns of speech? He interprets the intersubjective meanings which accompany such change. He concludes that the cultural assumptions which are manifested in linguistic change are such things as "group membership, age levels, and stylistic markers."[26] This analysis concurs with that of Blom and Gumperz by exhibiting how "interpersonal relations are transformed into speech performances."[27] The rules guiding linguistic change, therefore, govern speakers' perceptions of the utterances as units of intersubjective or social meaning. In this way, following different communicative norms results in constructing different cultural environments due to the enactment of a different set of cultural assumptions or communicative codes.

My purpose in this section has been to glean from ethnographic literature a few reports which illustrate abstractions of communicative codes and norms. Other analyses of cultural communication include Gardner's description of the highly individualized code of non-violence which constructs Paliyan culture;[28] Komarovsky's analysis of the communication codes of the "educ ted" and "less educated" in blue-collar culture;[29] and Varenne's research of American concepts and premises which, he argues, result in the cultural themes of individualism, community and love.[30] This brief overview of selected literature should help clarify the slightly different analytic reductions occurring in the ethnography of communication. As is evidenced in the literature, the analysis of both cultural and normative processes in human communication provide for unique and complementary insights of communication behavior.

The Rules Perspective

It is probably clear by now that the ethnography of communication has major points of intersection with the rules perspective. My discussion of communicative norms is somewhat isomorphic with Shimanoff's discussion of communication rules. Whereas Shimanoff distinguishes between rules and norms,[31] the ethnographic analysis of communicative norms relies, in principle, on rule-governed patterns of speech use.[32] While this convergence of the rules perspective and the ethnography of communication is rather apparent, other connections are less clear.

Recently Donohue, Cushman, and Nofsinger presented a comparison of rules perspectives.[33] Their discussion proposes two perspectives for rules. The focal point of the one is in how people make talk, and the other is in how people use talk to accomplish goals. First, let us consider the perspective interested in how people make talk - they illustrate this perspective with the work of Nofsinger and Hawes.[34] This stance assumes actors rely on a speech community whose members interpret phenomena in common ways. It is assumed that actors share rules of interpretation and how things are communicated. These rules are "common sense" or preserved in talk implicitly. To investigate such rules, an investigator must become immersed in the language community, for these rules are a product of the investigator's intersubjective stance. The intent is to specify the procedures which actors use to understand and interpret speech events. The knowledge gained from this approach illustrates how actors create and make meaningful their world. It is probably clear that this approach is aligned with our analysis of cultural codes in communication by focusing on how persons use speech to create meaning in their social world. These investigators (along with the ethnographic studies discussed above) adopt an intersubjective stance as a means of examining communication conduct through the meaningful structure of language but need to distinguish universal principles from particular concepts and premises.

The second perspective which Donohue, Cushman and Nofsinger elucidate is based on the use of talk to accomplish goals--they illustrate this approach with the work of Cushman and Pearce.[35]

This perspective assumes 1) actors are aware that they do not share a common ground, 2) actors have conscious understanding of their differing perspectives, hence 3) establish common lines of action through communicating. The focus of actors from this perspective is in solving problems. Rules are seen as governing how the problem solving tasks are accomplished. To investigate these rules the researcher becomes an "ethnographer" (their term) who watches how rules are negotiated to accomplish a task. The intent of the investigation is 1) to study the types of tasks which generate standardized rule usages and episodic sequences, 2) to locate and scientifically measure rules concerning their generality and practical force, and 3) to specify the rule structure operating in the completion of a task. The knowledge gained from this approach allows actors from different perspectives to coordinate action and accomplish some task according to a set of obligatory rules. This perspective is apparently concerned with the system of communication norms which guide and regulate problem solving tasks. The investigator observes communication conduct in an effort to specify the obligatory rules which govern the conduct. An objective stance is adopted in an attempt to specify the guides of action. The inherent focus is on the norms of communication conduct. Although the cultural domain is not excluded from this perspective, it assumes secondary importance. This is primarily due to the epistemological stance adopted with this perspective.

It is important to understand these two perspectives as two different analytic reductions. The former, concerned with <u>how people make talk</u>, is parallel to the ethnographer's analysis of cultural communication; the latter, concerned with <u>how people use talk to</u>

accomplish goals, is parallel to the ethnographer's analysis of communication norms. While the analysis of communication norms is based on rule governed speech use, there are potential ambiguities in referring to cultural codes of communication as rule governed. Recall the functions of cultural communication which serve to 1) unify the communication norms within a coherent set of symbols and meanings, and 2) generate meanings by discarding, altering and creating conceptions in reference to conventional meanings. A cultural code refers to a rule as serving both unifying and creative functions, as discussed above. For this reason, cultural processes are understood as communication codes or cultural codes of communication which manifest regularities in, or conventional rules of, meaning.

Another perspective which emphasizes communication norms has been proposed by Sigman. He implicitly assigns cultural processes a secondary role as he defines the study of rule-governed behavior as "a research procedure concerned with the isolation and examination of theoretically and/or methodologically significant behavior units."[36] Sigman focuses on behavior units and structure while searching for consistent patterns of action. He agrees with Cushman and Whiting in stating that rules "must have potential for being reduced into the form,'in context X, Y is required or permitted.'"[37] This conception of rules is, no doubt, consistent with our discussion of communicative norms. If communicative norms were Sigman's exclusive concern, there would be no problem here. But, he states agreement with Hymes on the criterial features of a definition for a rule which are met by specifying 1) culturally defined, and so cross-culturally diverse units, 2) relations between units, and 3) meanings.[38]

Later he cites Hymes claiming rules "should attempt to specify the cultural belief system, or 'norms of interpretation.'"[39] We would assume from Sigman's discussion that "meanings" and "norms of interpretation" could be gleaned by examining "behavior units." While we are not certain what Sigman means by behavior units, we must be aware of the focus of his interest, which is primarily in how behavior or communication conduct is performed consonant with an implied set of communicative norms (which usually treats cultural processes as relatively unproblematic and invariant). He also expresses interest in how the meaningful structure of speech is understood -- interpreted according to a set of cultural codes. Sigman's approach hints very briefly at the latter, while focusing primarily on the former.

The above points should serve to clarify the points of convergence between the rules perspective and the ethnographic perspective. Both the rules and the ethnographic perspectives make a similar abstraction from or analytic reduction of the communication process. While the rules perspective tends to make a single analytic reduction of normative and cultural processes in formulating rules (or norms as discussed above), the ethnographic perspective makes two analytic reductions in the analysis of normative and cultural processes, norms and cultural codes, respectively.

DISCUSSION

As stated earlier, the ethnography of communication attempts to discover and describe how language behavior is used and interpreted in a particular speech community. It is assumed that rules of language use and interpretation are culture specific and must, therefor:,

be discovered in each case. The ethnographic enterprise is based on a descriptive-theoretical framework which guides inquiry into the particular community and serves as the basis for comparative theoretical analyses.[40] With this perspective and method, the ethnographic enterprise is, unlike that group of scholars proposing universal patterns of speech,[41] or universal standards for speech use.[42]

The fundamental move in this paper takes Schneider's conception of norm and culture as a basis for two general abstractions performed in the ethnography of communication.[43] In so doing, culture becomes an important and irreducible analytic construct consisting of the concepts or symbols, premises and values of a speech community. Taken as a whole, the cultural code implicates a belief system, a world view or an interpretive context used to give form to a mass of information. Given a cultural code, the world attains a particular coherence and meaning. If an aspect of communication requires common understandings and some sense of shared identity, which it undoubtedly does, cultural codes provide its base. On the basis of cultural codes, human communication becomes a meaningful social activity. Often, researchers have assumed cultural processes are matter-of-fact, common knowledge or common sense and have, therefore, given them minimal attention. By focusing on communicative norms and ignoring the cultural codes in communication, we are missing potentially rich sources in understanding the patterned use and meaning of human communication.

Throughout this essay, I have referred to the ethnography of communication, broadly, as it subsumes these two general abstractions, the normative and cultural. I have defined both regarding their

distinctive features, briefly illustrated their use on a selected text from High School, exemplified their currency in some recent communication research, and discussed their logical parallels in the rules perspective. By searching both norms and codes, and acknowledging the uniqueness of each, the ethnographer can describe and interpret the language behavior of a speech community. In the process, one gains a productive insight into the patterned use and meaning of human communication.

FOOTNOTES

[1]See F. Boas, Race, Language and Culture, (New York: MacMillan, 1948); R. Benedict, Patterns of Culture, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), M. Mead, Coming of Age in Samoa, (New York: Mentor Books, 1949); C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, (New York: Basic Books, 1973); W. Goodenough, Culture, Language and Society, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1971) and Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology, (Chicago: Aldine, 1970).

[2]See the programmatic essay by Dell Hymes, "Models of the Interaction of Language in Social Life," in Directions in Socio-linguistics: The Ethnography of Communication, ed. by J.J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 35-71; J. Blom and J.J. Gumperz, "Social Meaning in Linguistic Structure: Code Switching in Norway," in Gumperz and Hymes (1972), 407-34; P.R. Sanday, "The Ethnographic Paradigm(s)," Administrative Science Quarterly, 24(1979), 527-528.

[3]For examples see G. Philipsen, "Speaking 'Like a Man' in Teamsterville: Culture and Patterns of Role Enactment in an Urban Neighborhood," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 61 (1975), 13-22; G. Philipsen, "Places for Speaking in Teamsterville," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 62(1976), 15-25; J. Daniel and G. Smitherman, "How I Got Over: Communication Dynamics in the Black Community," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 62(1976), 26-39.

[4]See Philipsen, "Linearity in Research Design in Ethnographic Studies of Speaking," Communication Quarterly, 25(1977), 42-50.

[5]See D. Schneider, "Notes Toward a Theory of Culture," in Meaning in Anthropology ed. by K.R. Basso and H.A. Selby, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 197-220.

[6]See Hymes, 1972.

[7]cf. D. Cushman and W.B. Pearce, "Generality and Necessity in Three Types of human communication theory with special attention to rules theory," Human Communication Research, 3(1977), 344-353; G.H. von Wright, "The Logic of Practical Discourse," in Contemporary Philosophy ed. by R. Klikansky, (Italy: La Nuava Italia Editrice, 1968), 141-167; T. Smith, "Practical Inference and its Implications for Communication Theory," Unpublished manuscript, n.d.

[8]M. Komarovsky, Blue Collar Marriage, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

[9]See J. Jackson, "Normative Power and Conflict Potential," Sociological Methods and Research, 4(1975), 237-263.

[10]See D. Carbaugh, "Toward a Perspective on Cultural Communication," paper presented at SCA, Louisville, KY, 1982.

[11]C. Taylor, "Interpretation and Sciences of Man," Understanding and Social Inquiry ed. by F.R. Dallmayr and T.A. McCarthy, (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 103-131.

[12]Schneider, p. 198.

[13]C. Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in Basso and Selby, 221-237.

[14]For an extension and elaboration on the tools presented here for cultural analysis see D. Carbaugh, "Toward a Perspective on Cultural Communication," Paper presented at SCA, Louisville, KY, 1982.

[15]T. Katriel and G. Philipsen, "What we need is 'Communication': 'Communication' as a Cultural Category in some American Speech," Communication Monographs, 1981, 48, 301-317.

[16]For an illustration of dimensions which underlie cultural codes see T. Katriel and G. Philipsen, 1981; see also P. Seitel, "Haya Metaphors for Speech," Language in Society, 1974, 3, 51-67.

[17]Dell Hymes has discussed ways of speaking as a general assessment of a people's modes of speaking and ways of life. For this most general of categories in the ethnography of communication see D. Hymes, "Ways of Speaking," in Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking, ed. by R. Bauman and J. Sherzer (Cambridge University Press, 1974), 433-451.

[18]For a rhetorical analysis of this film see T. Benson, "The Rhetorical Structure of Frederick Wiseman's High School," Communication Mongraphs, 47(1980), 223-261.

[19]The descriptive-theoretical framework implemented here is heuristic by design. It provides two general functions. First, it allows for the description and interpretation of this particular case. Second, it provides the basis for comparative analyses of particular reports which would re-inform the descriptive framework and lay an inductive groundwork for communication theory. For a further discussion of this design see, in addition to Hymes, 1972, the following discussions

by D. Hymes, "Qualitative/Quantitative Research Methodologies in Education: A Linguistic Perspective," Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 1977, 8, 165-176; "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting," Journal of Social Issues, 1967, 2, 8-28; "The Ethnography of Speaking," in Anthropology and Human Behavior, ed. by T. Gladwin and W.C. Sturtevant (Washington, D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1962), 13-53.

[20]It is somewhat incidental that this mother's question is addressable through an analysis of cultural communication. In this text the mother's "problem in understanding" has served to focus our analysis. Generally, the analysis of cultural communication makes problematic what is "common sense" or the "shared understanding" of a particular group rather than their interpretive problems.

[21]Philipsen, 1975, 1976.

[22]Philipsen, 1976, p. 15.

[23]Daniel and Smitherman, 1976.

[24]J.J. Gumperz, "Dialect and Conversational Inference in Urban Communication," Language and Society, 7(1978), p. 406.

[25]W. Labov, "On the Mechanism of Linguistic Change," in Gumperz and Hymes, 512-537.

[26]Ibid, pp. 534-537.

[27]Blom and Gumperz, p. 432.

[28]P. Gardner, "Symmetric Respect and Memorate Knowledge: The Structure and Ecology of Individualistic Cultures," Southwest Journal of Anthropology, 22(1966), 389-415.

[29]Komarovsky, 1976.

[30]H. Varenne, Americans Together: Structured Diversity in a Midwestern Town, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1977).

[31]S.B. Shimanoff, Communication Rules: Theory and Research, (Beverley Hills: Sage Publications, 1980), pp. 63-65.

[32]See D. Hymes, "The Ethnography of Speaking," in Anthropology and Human Behavior, ed. by T. Gladwin and W.T. Sturtevant, (Washington, D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1962), 13-53.

[33]W.A. Donohue, D. Cushman and R.E. Nofsinger, "Creating and Confronting Social Order: A Comparison of Rules Perspectives," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 44(1980), 5-19.

[34]R.E. Nofsinger, "The Demand Ticket: A Conversational Device for Getting the Floor," Speech Monographs, 42(1974), 1-9, and, "On Answering Questions Indirectly: Some Rules in the Grammar of Doing Conversation," Human Communication Research, 2(1976), 172-181; L. Hawes, "How Writing is used in Talk: A study of Communication Logic in Use," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 62(1976), 350-360.

[35]Cushman and Pearce, 1977.

[36]S.J. Sigman, "On Communication Rules from Social Perspective," Human Communication Research, 7(1980), p. 38.

[37]Ibid, p. 43.

[38]Ibid, p. 38.

[39]Ibid, p. 43.

[40]See Hymes, 1972 and Philipsen, 1977.

[41]See P. Brown and S. Levinson, "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena," in Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction ed. by E. Goody, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 56-289; E.A. Schegloff, "Sequencing in Conversational Openings," in Gumperz and Hymes, 346-380.

[42]See J.R. Searle, Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); H.P. Grice, "The Logic of Conversation," in Syntax and Semantics Volume 3: Speech Acts ed. by P. Cole and J.L. Morgan, (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 41-58.

[43]Schneider, 1976.